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RABID RACCOON FOUND IN RIVERVIEW AREA

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Hillsborough County, FL- A raccoon in the area of Frost Aster Drive in Riverview is the first confirmed case of rabies for 2019 in Hillsborough County. No rabies alert has been issued. An alert is not being issued since this is a single case found in wildlife. However, this incident serves as a reminder to ensure pets are up-to-date on rabies vaccination. It should be expected that there is always some level of the virus in our wildlife population.

On Tuesday, October 15, a man found a raccoon attacking his dog. The dog was taken to a nearby veterinary clinic and was treated for wounds, received a rabies vaccine, and is expected to recover. The Florida Department of Health in Hillsborough County (DOH-Hillsborough) was contacted and tested the raccoon for rabies. The results came back positive for rabies.

DOH-Hillsborough is notifying all homes within a 500-foot radius of where the raccoon was found. The dog is quarantined to ensure it does not become ill with rabies.

An animal with rabies could infect other wild animals or domestic animals that have not been vaccinated against rabies.

People should avoid contact with any animal that lives in the wild, particularly raccoons, bats, foxes, skunks, otters, bobcats, and coyotes. Some may be tempted to feed or help the animal, but it isn't worth the risk. The only definitive way to determine if an animal has rabies is a lab examination.

Anyone who has been bitten, scratched, or exposed to the saliva of any wild animal or an animal that is acting unusual should always report the exposure to the local health department. Rabies is a disease of the nervous system and is fatal to warm blooded animals and humans.

In 2018, Hillsborough County identified 10 rabid animals (six cats, two bats and two raccoons) that exposed 20 people and five domestic dogs to the disease. It's clear that there are rabid animals living throughout the county and state.

Residents and visitors are advised to take the following precautions:

- Keep rabies vaccinations up to date for all pets.
- If your pet is bitten by a wild animal, seek veterinary assistance for the animal immediately and contact the Florida Department of Health in Hillsborough County at (813) 307-8059.
- **Do not** handle, feed, or unintentionally attract wild animals with open garbage cans or litter.
- **Never** adopt wild animals or bring them into your home.
- Teach children **never** to handle unfamiliar animals, wild or domestic, even if they appear friendly.
- Prevent bats from entering living quarters or occupied spaces in homes, churches, schools, and other similar areas, where they might come in contact with people and pets.
- Persons who have been bitten or scratched by wild or domestic animals should seek medical attention and report the injury to the Florida Department of Health in Hillsborough County at (813) 307-8059.

For further information on rabies, go to <http://hillsborough.floridahealth.gov/> or call the Florida Department of Health in Hillsborough County at (813) 307-8000, or Hillsborough County Pet Resource center at (813) 744-5660.

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